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BUTTE COUNTY WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO MULTIPLE COUNTS OF BANK FRAUD, POSSESSION OF STOLEN U.S. MAIL, AND CONSPIRACY

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that MELISSA ANN MEIER, 19, of Chico, California, pleaded guilty this morning before United States District Judge Frank C. Damrell, Jr. to two counts of bank fraud and two counts of possession of stolen U.S. Mail.

This case is the product of a combined investigation by the Butte County Sheriff's Department, Chico Police Department, the United States Postal Inspection Service, and other law enforcement agencies in Northern California, specifically including state and local authorities in Glenn, Tehama, and Plumas Counties.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Michelle Rodriguez, who is prosecuting the case, from April 2007 through June 21, 2007, MEIER and co-conspirator JODI LYNN GARCIA, 32, of Paradise, California, cashed forged checks stolen from the U.S. Mail. MEIER and GARCIA also negotiated checks that had been manufactured using account numbers obtained from stolen financial information. In June 2007, using the Internet, MEIER and GARCIA caused at least two \$5,000 checks to be issued on a victim's checking account for fraudulent use. MEIER and GARCIA were arrested on June 21, 2007 as they attempted to cash forged checks.

MEIER's sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 12, 2008. She faces up to 30 years imprisonment for bank fraud and up to five years additional imprisonment for conspiracy and for possession of stolen U.S. Mail. However, her actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

MEIER is the sixth defendant to be convicted in this case. Other defendants pleaded guilty as follows:

- HEATHER ANNE MORSHEAD, 25, of Magalia, California, on November 26, 2007, pleaded guilty to conspiracy and bank fraud charges. Her sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 12, 2008.
- HEATHER MICHELLE WILSON, 34, of Chico, California, who pleaded guilty on September 24, 2007 to five counts of bank fraud, a single count of possession of stolen U.S. Mail, and a single count of conspiracy. Her sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 19, 2008.

- TIFFANY ANN SABRAL, 27, of Chico, who pleaded guilty on August 27, 2007 to two counts of bank fraud and a single count of conspiracy—received a sentence of time served plus 36 months probation.
- TANYA LESLIE WELLMAN, 37, of Durham, California, who pleaded guilty on September 14, 2007 to four counts of bank fraud and a single count of conspiracy—received a sentence of time served plus 36 months probation.
- JODI LYNN GARCIA, 32, of Paradise, California, the ringleader in this case, who pleaded guilty on October 1, 2007 to two counts of conspiracy, bank fraud and aggravated I.D. theft—received a sentence of 65 months federal custody, plus 36 months probation.

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